

P 281449Z DEC 95
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9545
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 004678

E.O. 12958: DECL:12/28/05
TAGS: PTER KPAL KISL PREF LE SY
SUBJECT: MORE ON ARREST OF LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN
SUNNI FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP

REF: (A) BEIRUT 4613; (B) BEIRUT 3557

¶1. CLASSIFIED CONFIDENTIAL BY RONALD SCHLICHER,
CHARGE. REASONS 1.5 B AND D.

¶2. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT HRAWI, CITING PEACE
PROCESS AND OTHER REASONS, HAS DECIDED AGAINST
ALLOWING THE LAF TO ENTER 'AYN AL-HILWEH REFUGEE
CAMP TO ARREST THE FUGITIVE LEADER OF THE
RECENTLY DISCOVERED SUNNI FUNDAMENTALIST
MOVEMENT (REFTEL). INFORMATION LEAKED FROM THE
INVESTIGATION HAS SPECIFICALLY ACCUSED SUDAN AND
OSAMA BIN LADEN OF TRAINING AND FINANCING THE
GROUP. MURKY INFO SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY BE A
CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION AND A
SPLINTER GROUP OF THE ANO. END SUMMARY.

"ABU MUHJEN" IN 'AYN AL-HILWEH, LAF AT GATES

¶3. (U) AHMED 'ABD AL-KARIM AL-SA'ADI ("ABU
MUHJEN"), THE LEADER OF THE LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN
SUNNI FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP (WHICH CALLS ITSELF
"'ASBAT AL-ANSAR") ACCUSED OF MURDERING
"AL-AHBASH" LEADER NIZAR AL-HALABI AND OF
PLOTTING TO MURDER OTHER LEBANESE AND SYRIAN
PERSONALITIES, IS CURRENTLY IN SIDON'S 'AYN
AL-HILWEH REFUGEE CAMP. INDEED, ON THE DAY
FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF MOST MEMBERS OF HIS
GROUP, ABU MUHJEN GAVE AN INTERVIEW TO
"AL-SAFIR" NEWSPAPER.

¶4. (U) HE DENIED INVOLVEMENT IN THE MURDER AND
PLOTTING, DESPITE HIS COMRADES' TELEVISED
CONFESIONS AND RE-ENACTMENT OF THE
ASSASSINATION. HE ALSO DENIED ANY FOREIGN
FUNDING OF HIS GROUP, AND HINTED DARKLY THAT HIS
PROBLEMS WERE SOMEHOW A ZIONIST PLOT.

¶5. (C) THE LAF, WANTING TO CAP ITS SUCCESSFUL
ROUND-UP OF THE GROUP VIA THE ARREST OF ABU
MUHJEN, IS DEPLOYED AROUND 'AYN AL-HILWEH, AND
REPORTEDLY SEARCHING ALL WHO ENTER AND EXIT.
LAF COMMANDER LAHOUD ASKED PRESIDENT HRAWI FOR
PERMISSION TO ENTER THE CAMP, BUT HRAWI TOLD
CHARGE THAT HE HAS DECIDED NOT TO GIVE
PERMISSION.

HRAWI: TIMING WRONG FOR LAF TO ENTER CAMPS

¶6. (C) HRAWI SAID THAT AN OPERATION INSIDE THE
CAMP WOULD LIKELY PRODUCE CASUALTIES AMONG THE
INNOCENT OCCUPANTS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND
CHILDREN. HE ALSO ADDED THAT THE CURRENT
DELICACY OF PEACE-PROCESS POLITICS DID NOT NEED
THE POSSIBLE DISRUPTION THAT COULD BE ENGENDERED

BY AN OPERATION GONE WRONG. AND, ULTIMATELY, ADDED HRAWI, THE LAF NEEDS TO CONCENTRATE ON PLANS FOR EVENTUAL DEPLOYMENT TO THE BORDER INSTEAD OF ON THE REFUGEE CAMPS.

REPORTED SUDANESE AND BIN LADEN LINKS NOW PUBLIC

¶ 7. (C) REFTEL NOTED INFO THAT SAUDI FINANCIER OF TERROR OSAMA BIN LADEN HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE BANKROLLER OF THE GROUP. ON DEC. 27, LIKELY LAF SOURCES LEAKED TO THE MEDIA THAT THE LAF, IN HANDING OVER THE FILES TO THE CIVIL PROSECUTORS, HAD UNCOVERED EVIDENCE OF BIN LADEN'S INVOLVEMENT, ALONG WITH EVIDENCE THAT "SUDANESE OFFICERS" HAD TRAINED THE GROUP'S MEMBERS (WHO, WHEN, AND WHERE WERE NOT MENTIONED).

¶ 8. (C) THE SUDANESE EMBASSY (NOTABLY OMITTING ANY REFERENCE TO REPORTED KHARTOUM RESIDENT BIN LADEN) HAS PUBLICLY DENIED ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN SUDAN AND THE GROUP, AND IS SUGGESTING PRIVATELY THAT EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR ADEL AL-KHUDARI IS SPREADING LIES ABOUT SUDAN AS PART OF THE ONGOING BILATERAL PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

AN ANO LINK?

¶ 9. (C) IN REF B WE NOTED THAT, IN THE WAKE OF AL-HALABI'S MURDER, AN APPARENT ANO SPLINTER GROUP ACCUSED ABU NIDAL OF ORDERING THE HIT. WE HAVE SEEN NO PROOF, BUT ARE HEARING RUMORS FROM THE NORTH (FROM THE SOURCES THAT TIPPED US ON THE BIN LADEN CONNECTION) THAT THE ARRESTED GROUP MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DEC. 8 MURDER IN TRIPOLI OF ANO FINANCIAL OFFICIAL MUSTAFA 'ATTOUR, WHO WAS GUNNED DOWN IN MUCH THE SAME FASHION AS AL-HALABI.

¶ 10. (C) AT THE SAME TIME, THERE ARE OTHER RUMORS, AGAIN WITH NO PROOF OFFERED, THAT ABU MUHJEN WORKS FOR PLO DISSIDENT MUNIR AL-MUQDAH, WHO CURRENTLY IS THE STRONG MAN IN 'AYN AL-HILWEH.

¶ 11. (C) COMMENT: WE WILL WATCH CAREFULLY FOR CLARIFYING INFORMATION, BUT NOTE THAT, IN THE HOTHOUSE REJECTIONIST POLITICS OF 'AYN AL-HILWEH, VIRTUALLY ANY COMBINATION OF LOYALTIES AND ALLEGIANCES IS POSSIBLE.

SCHLICHER